

Budget Address to Louisville Metro Council, May 26, 2005:

"Investing in Louisville's Future"

by Mayor Jerry E. Abramson

I appreciate the opportunity to join you today ... and present my proposed budget for the year ahead.

If money talks... this budget has a lot to say... to the citizens of our community.

It says:

"City revenue is tight. But you won't see cuts in services or a tax increase."

If money talks... it says:

"Public safety and health are Number 1 priorities for Metro Government – from police to EMS to cleaner air."

If money talks...this budget says:

"We're committed to improving job opportunities, quality of life and strengthening families in our hometown."

And if money talks . . . this budget says:

"We are dedicated to taking Louisville from good to great ... by continuing to invest in our community's future."

This budget -- the third since our new city of Louisville was born – reflects our goals as a government ... our values as a community. . . and our dreams for the future.

My budget builds squarely on the progress we've made over the past 2½ years.

In 2003 we established a vision – and we have followed through ...department by department ... agency by agency ...to move our community forward toward those goals.

In our first year, we focused on building a strong foundation for our new merged government – consolidating city and county operations and putting in place systems to increase efficiency and effectiveness. And we staked out a major commitment that first year to create a \$70 million MetroSafe emergency communications and operations network ... that will link police, fire, EMS and other first responders . . . for the first time ever . . .both locally and regionally.

With last year's budget, we also established a \$25 million Foundation for the Future bond issue to solve... over the next 3 years ... long-deferred infrastructure problems – from crumbling sidewalks to firehouses in disrepair.

This year's budget invests in those priorities – and more.

We continue to streamline government ... 2½ years after merger... to get the right people ... in the right jobs ...with the right tools... in the right locations. You will see the first budget expenditures proposed for MetroSafeas we consolidate our 911 emergency dispatch teams in one location. And this year ... having completed assessments, design and cost estimates...we will spend about \$18 million of the \$25 million for those Foundation-for-the-Future capital projects... from parks to swimming pools, from street repairs to building maintenance. At the same time, this budget invests \$20 million for other capital expenses. . . from sidewalk repairs to street resurfacing, from traffic light replacement ... to new technology that will save money and increase our effectiveness.

The Revenue Picture

Now... before I set forth my priorities in this new budget. . .let me first put them in perspective by sharing with you the numbers we face for the year ahead.

- We expect to see a 3 percent increase in revenue – roughly \$13 million ... with modest growth in occupational and property taxes.
- But before we even got started, that \$13 million ... plus \$4 million more ... a total of roughly \$17 million ... was committed to mandated cost increases: higher contributions for pensions ... for health insurance... and funding for the final year of labor contracts we inherited from the former city and former county.
- In terms of personnel costs: We have promised over the past 2½ years to improve efficiency and to eliminate duplication. And we have delivered.

Since city and county governments merged 2½ years ago, we have cut nearly 800 funded positions throughout our workforce – a reduction of 10 percent. This year we will continue to “right-size” government – by eliminating vacant funded positions in some areas while adding positions to support key initiatives in other areas ... like EMS, police and technology.

What all this adds up to is a budget that requires us to make the most of our existing resources: This budget invests in basic services – and the key priorities that I believe will pay off for our citizens in the months and years ahead.

Public Safety and Public Health

This year's budget will continue to invest in public safety and public health.

Emergency Medical Services: Our newly merged emergency medical service will begin to deliver on our promise to the citizens of this community: to establish the community-wide EMS system that each of us wants ... if we ever find ourselves ... or a loved one... injured in a car accident . . . or struck with severe chest pain. Quite simply: our goal is to shave every second we can off our response time and to provide enhanced life-saving medical care.

Since our EMS merger in February, we have hired approximately 56 new EMTs and paramedics. My budget proposes to add 46 more paramedics and EMTs in 2005-2006 the largest EMS staff we have ever had on the streets in our community... which we believe will provide the best possible 24/7 care to the citizens of Louisville.

This year we will also replace 11 EMS ambulances and refurbish 7 more. ...

But taking our EMS to the next level is not only about more people and vehicles: It will include continual assessment of services and quality of care . . . medically focused... research based . . . and data driven.

Police protection: When it comes to public safety, my budget continues to provide the Louisville Metro police department with the talent and the tools to best protect our citizens. This budget supports the chief's continuing efforts to hire civilians for office jobs to free up more officers to work the streets ... and it starts 3 recruit classes to train roughly 100 new officers during this upcoming fiscal year.

The value we place on our police department is clear when you look at our investment of tax dollars: Nearly 1 out of every 3 general-fund operating dollars goes to Louisville Metro Police. In fact, of that \$13 million in new city revenue I mentioned earlier, \$10 million ... 75 percent ... will go to police, to ensure this community has the officers it needs with the equipment, training and benefits they require.

MetroSafe: And finally, this is also an important year for MetroSafe – as our emergency communications system moves from vision to reality. Two weeks ago, we broke down walls to start the renovation of space in the Urban Government Center for MetroSafe Phase 1 – and ... when it opens this fall ... we will break down barriers that have kept our police, fire, EMS and other first-responders from seamless communication to allow them to work most effectively as a team during a crisis -- not only for the benefit of the citizens of our community. . . but also for the citizens of our surrounding counties on both sides of the river.

Public Health

We will also invest in keeping our residents safer this year through a number of public health initiatives....

Health disparities initiative: Our health department conducted a study last year that highlighted dramatic health disparities in our community related to race and ethnicity ... including higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, asthma and cancer among African Americans and ethnic minorities. The same patterns are true nationally – and our health department director, Dr. Adewale Troutman, has been a national leader in mobilizing the medical community to reverse this pattern. In the year ahead, Dr. Troutman will lay the groundwork for a new program to make Louisville a leader in tackling this challengenot in a university research setting ...but ... with a unique twist ... through applied community research working with local residents and organizations.

Healthier air: In addition, cleaner, healthier air ... will get more attention ... as we begin STAR ... our Strategic Toxic Air Reduction program... that targets cancer-causing chemicals in our air.

And ...as an employer . . . city government will help improve our city's air quality by letting our workers ride TARC for free ...using their work ID cards... a benefit U of L has offered its workers for several years.

Job Opportunities

We will also invest this year in improving job opportunities.

Local government has played a crucial role over the last 20 years in the economic development of Louisville – expanding our airport ... paving the way for the

UPS hub and the spinoff investments and jobs that followed. . . supporting our medical center as a job-growth area ... making downtown attractive for the investment of by the sector of millions of dollars... and providing incentives to attract new manufacturing companies, major call centers and expanded logistics operations.

This budget continues our support for the creation of new jobs – to retain the jobs we have, encourage current employers to expand . . . and attract new employers to this community. This year we fund...

- Our continuing partnership with Greater Louisville Inc., which provides the crucial day-to-day staff work for business retention, expansion, and attraction
- In addition, this budget continues funding the Mayor's High Impact program ... which reaches out to connect with our fastest-growing local companies ...65 so far and counting. . .to provide the support they need to continue investing and creating jobs in our hometown.
- My budget also recommends expanded investment in MetaCyte, our medical-center incubator, to ensure our continued support for emerging life-science companies.

Vibrant Neighborhoods and Downtown

This budget continues to invest in both the development of our downtown as well as strengthening our neighborhoods.

That includes:

- Providing workshops and training to help urban and suburban neighborhoods organize to help themselves ...
- Helping neighborhood commercial corridors come to life again with new businesses through our successful COOL program...
- And targeted revitalization of neighborhood housing – including Newburg, Portland, and the Cane Run Road area.
- Most ambitious of all is our \$2.4 million continued support of the redevelopment of Clarksdale... the public-private partnership ... that will create a mixed-income neighborhood ... where housing projects once stood . . . at the eastern gateway to downtown.

Its impact will ripple through surrounding neighborhoods ... as partners build new houses and rehab older ones in Smoketown, Phoenix Hill and Shelby Park...transforming those areas, too.

This budget continues our two-decade-long renaissance of downtown ... an outstanding example of extraordinary public-private partnership. This year, you will see the continued expansion of Waterfront Park ... the ribbon-cutting for the Ali Center ... and the opening of the major new Louisville Science Center exhibit, The World Around Us... plus streetscape improvements. . .sidewalks, benches, planters and trees ... along East and West Main Street.

Quality of Life

The vitality of our neighborhoods ... and downtown ... add to the quality of life in our community. . . But so do other initiatives we plan to invest in this year:

- Our City of Parks initiative... is a new public-private partnership to develop more than 3,000 acres of new parkland in our suburbs ... inspired by the Olmsted Parks that add so much to quality of neighborhood life in the urban core of Louisville. My budget pledges \$1 million in city funds ...to match the \$20 million that is being raised in the private sector by David Jones Sr. ...for this multi-year vision that includes the addition of land in the Floyds Fork watershed, expansion of Jefferson Memorial Forest, a hiking/biking trail around the Louisville Metro perimeter, and a major upgrade of the city's existing parks. This initiative is the largest expansion of our park system in 3 decades. . . an investment that will pay off for our children and grandchildren .. and will pay off quite literally ... factoring into the decisions of people to move here from cities across the nation.
- Bicycle riders will benefit also from this budget, as we commit state and federal transportation dollars for the first time to bike paths and bike-safety improvements. In the coming year, we will come one leg closer to completing our Ohio River Levee Trail. That trail will ultimately lead from Farnsley-Moreman house in the Southwest ... to the RiverWalk downtown...then out River Road. In addition, this year we will also focus on

several new bike demonstration projects on existing streets ... along our Olmsted parkways as well as along side roads throughout Louisville. Look for new signs to mark our bike paths ... a new city bikeway coordinator ... and safety improvements at key intersections where bike and vehicle accidents have occurred.

- Our libraries are both a quality-of-life amenity ... and the front-line city agency that reaches out to make Louisville a city of readers ... and educational achievers. Our library budget continues our commitment of \$3.5 million to purchase new books and other materials ... and adds to funding for land acquisition ... in accordance with the library's master plan.
- For many Louisville residents, any conversation about quality of life must include the professional performing arts institutions that loom large on our local landscape. The Kentucky Opera, Louisville Ballet, Louisville Orchestra and Actors Theatre of Louisville all bring pleasure to local and regional audiences ... and also send a message to folks outside our hometown ... that Louisville is a city with an extraordinary ... vibrant ... arts community. Faced with financial problems, these four arts organizations ... under the umbrella of the cultural arts blueprint ... have come to the city for extraordinary help. They have pledged to me that they will do what it takes to get their financial houses in orderif we provide assistance over a 3-year transition period. As a result, this budget sets aside \$300,000 to give them the breathing room to establish a stronger financial base ... and promises a similar amount for 2 additional years. However this proposal is contingent on their ability to attract a similar amount on an annual basis from both the private sector and state government.

Youth Initiatives

And...finally ...I don't have to tell you that the future health and growth of any community hinges on its young people – their dreams, their energy, their skills. Several initiatives in this budget reach out to young people in new ways:

- I propose in this budget a new Youth One Stop Center, which will open on the Jefferson Community College campus ... to provide a single access point for 16-

to 21-year-olds to apply for jobs ...and connect with educational resources. It will be located on the 6th floor at the Jefferson Education Center at 2nd and Broadway ...and young people can go higher ... to upper floors in that very same building... to plan their higher education... to receive college guidance, financial aid and career planning.

- For “disconnected youth” ... who say, left high school before earning a diploma . . . the One Stop will have counselors to provide extra “case management” ... to help them with their next step. Kentuckiana Works is shepherding this project ... with partners that include the Louisville Metro Housing Authority, Louisville Metro Office for Youth Development and the Community Action Partnership. Other agencies have indicated a strong interest, including JCC, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Jefferson County Public Schools and the Louisville Urban League.
- This budget also continues funding for special high school counselors through the Louisville Education and Employment Partnership – to work with teens at risk of dropping out.
- When it comes to recreation and after-school programs for youth people, Metro Parks is planning new programs ... and partnerships ...so they have more access to park facilities in evenings, on weekends and during vacations. Metro Parks will work in partnership with community schools – and other agencies throughout our city.

Leading to succeed

I hope the message that you take away from this budget ... is that our partnership ... the work we have all done together ... is truly paying off

- That our clear game plan counts...
- That our consistent teamwork is yielding positive results ...
- And time and time again... partnership... not partisanship... delivers progress for the citizens of our hometown.

No one said it would be easy charting a course for our new Louisville . . . or staying the course till we reach our goals.

But I once heard a legendary local leader ... Rick Pitino ... speak about what you need to take a team ...any team ... to the next level.

“If you look closely at all great organizations, all great teams, all great people, the one common denominator is a second-to-none work ethic... .the intense effort to achieve... ,” he said.

“There can be no compromises... ”

I would add that the same is true of cities ... on the road from good . . .to great ... with their leaders -- their coaches -- and their citizens ... working together to bring alive their most ambitious hopes and dreams.

Our greatest effort will bring our greatest rewards for the citizens of our hometown ... our children and our grandchildren.